



Denali Citizens Council

www.denalicitizens.org * mail@denalicitizens.org * P.O. Box 78, Denali Park, AK 99755 * (907) 244-2510

March 21, 2025

Senator Lisa Murkowski
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski,

We are writing to express our concern over the recent illegal firings and staff reduction efforts by DOGE, specifically within the National Park Service. As you are no doubt aware, and have likely heard from many other sources, these job losses will have a profound effect on the national parks in Alaska, and their surrounding communities.

Within Denali National Park alone, which has a full-time year-round staff of 130, 4 were fired, and 11 took the deferred resignation option. While these numbers may not sound alarming, they represent an 11% reduction in this already small workforce. The hiring freeze stalled 21 new hires, many of which would have filled currently vacant positions. As of now, nearly one third of Denali National Park's year-round positions sit empty. One of these, now vacant, year-round positions would have been responsible for the hiring and supervision of 2 full-time summer seasonal employees, one summer intern, and one 4-year term position— and this is the fallout from the loss of just one year-round employee. Each vacancy represents a very real person with a unique skill set. The park cannot afford to have these people, and the work they do, minimized to deleted line items on a spreadsheet.

Additionally, these vacancies are imbalanced, and have left the park and its partners reeling in the wake. Operations most affected include: external relations, seasonal supervision, fleet management, custodial staff, road maintenance, reclamation projects, and search and rescue. Some of these losses will negatively impact the visitor experience or represent lost revenue, while others may actually put lives in danger. Due to cuts in external relations, for example, Denali Education Center- a local non-profit and park partner- was forced to issue a press release announcing the cancellation of their summer Denali Discovery Camps. These camps provide opportunities for K-8 children around the state to engage with the park, but park staff are integral for the success and safety of these programs. Without park service support, these camps are simply not possible. In addition to the lost opportunity for these children, the camps provide up to eight paid positions that have now been cut, and close to \$10,000 in wages that would have gone back into the community.

Denali also relies on a robust seasonal workforce to operate effectively. While the seasonal hiring freeze may have been lifted, the delay it caused has left concern about the timing and feasibility of the already-reduced year-round staff to interview, hire, train, and support the staff needed to prepare



the park and its facilities for 2025 visitorship. Many “career seasonals” in our community find themselves facing difficult decisions between waiting and hoping, or seeking work elsewhere. By the time the appropriate hiring gears are in motion, the returning local staff the park has come to rely on, may no longer be available.

The Denali Borough has the highest levels of federal employment in Alaska, per capita, but these losses are not just numbers— they are friends and neighbors, civil servants who have dedicated their lives to protecting our public spaces and natural resources. While we, as a community, have limited tools to forecast what the full impact will be, we are already feeling the effects; and our experience here may well be emblematic of what’s to come in the rest of the state, and around the country.

Denali Citizens Council was founded to provide a voice of conservation in Denali National Park. Much of our work over the years has focused on preservation and wildlife advocacy; using that voice to speak on behalf of the land and its natural inhabitants. Our mission has expanded over the years to grow with the park, and the community with which it is entwined. We now hope to amplify the voice of our community that asks for your help.

We thank you, sincerely, for your support in maintaining the Native name, Denali, for The Mountain we all love, and we ask for your continued support of the community that lives in its shadow.

Sincerely,

Denali Citizens Council Board of Directors:

Scott Richardson
Steve Carwile
Nancy Bale
Nancy Russell
Charlie Loeb